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Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations

Joint Inspection Unit

Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

Review of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

Note by the Secretary-General

Addendum

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly the comments of the Joint Inspection Unit on the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the review of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (A/54/334).

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Comments of the Joint Inspection Unit on the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the review of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (A/54/334)

1. Involvement in the area of humanitarian affairs, especially the search for an effective way to respond to humanitarian crises, has been one of the priority issues for the United Nations, as reflected in the programme for reform of the Organization (A/51/950 and Add.1-7). The review by the Office of Internal Oversight Services of the new structure set up in place of the previous Department of Humanitarian Affairs is therefore timely and well taken.

2. The report offers a description of mechanisms and a detailed analysis of efforts to improve efficiency and coordination. The Joint Inspection Unit concurs with the thrust of the report and avails itself of this opportunity to contribute to the subject.

3. It may be recalled that the Joint Inspection Unit examined the situation with regard to humanitarian assistance when the Department of Humanitarian Affairs was in operation. In particular, reference is made to the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Investigation of the relationship between humanitarian assistance and peacekeeping operations" (A/50/572). Although in that report the Unit dealt with one specific aspect of the humanitarian intervention, its conclusions touch upon general issues in complex emergencies, especially as regards matters of coordination in the field. In the opinion of the Unit, some of the recommendations contained in its report are still valid and in fact certain aspects of its recommendations appear to have guided the replacement of the Department by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

4. The Office of Internal Oversight Services has acknowledged the non-operational role of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and its predominant role of coordination among the various actors in humanitarian emergencies. This is an important point that needs to be clearly stated to avoid confusion and misunderstanding. For this reason, the review of the Office of Internal Oversight Services should have placed more emphasis on the non-operational nature of the role of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, at the beginning of the report rather than at the end.

5. The Joint Inspection Unit agrees that the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has a need for access to the Security Council, a need that was envisaged in the above-mentioned report of the Unit.

6. The Joint Inspection Unit considers that the very detailed description of the diversified activities of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs could justify more substance in the concluding recommendation, which should be more action-oriented. The Unit supports, however, the recommendations in section VII of the report. In particular, it notes the relationship between the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) indicating that the non-operational role of the former needs to be coupled with the operational role of the latter. In the above-mentioned report, the Unit suggested that coordination in the field among the humanitarian actors be, by preference, assigned to the Resident Coordinator, with implicit recognition of the link between the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and UNDP.

7. The Joint Inspection Unit recommends the following:

(a) The issue of coordination should be better analysed in the case of complex emergencies where a military component is present on the ground. A chain of command

seems to be needed to avoid conflict among the various actors, as was the case on previous occasions (see *inter alia* recommendation 7 of the Unit in its report entitled "Investigation of the relationship between humanitarian assistance and peacekeeping operations" (A/50/572);

(b) More attention should be devoted to lessons learned. Each case of humanitarian intervention has its specificity, but past experiences, whether successes or failures, may offer valuable contributions. For that reason, in the above-mentioned report, the Unit recommended to the then Department of Humanitarian Affairs that lessons learned from each operation be documented and kept in a central data bank for reference by the United Nations entities active in humanitarian operations;

(c) The human rights component in complex emergencies should receive the attention it deserves. Efforts made to improve coordination should not overlook that aspect and should recognize the role of the human rights presence as appropriate;

(d) The concern expressed about the decreasing funds collected through the consolidated appeals process should be examined in parallel with the reasons for the increasing preference of donors for bilateral interventions. The percentage of absorption of resources by the United Nations mechanism in the distribution of donations could be carefully assessed;

(e) The guidelines contained in the annex to General Assembly resolution 46/182 of 19 December 1991 are supposed to apply to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. The Joint Inspection Unit would suggest the issuance of a Secretary-General's bulletin similar to that suggested for the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. Such a bulletin would be a useful contribution to defining the functions of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.